

Tabled at Hearing 18/09/2014
Fed Farmers

Hearing Statement of Mr Murray Shipley

Hearing of Submissions on Variation 1 to the Proposed Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan.

Thursday, 18th of September 2014

My name is Murray Shipley.

I am speaking today in support of my further submission (in support of the submission of Federated Farmers) on Variation 1 to the proposed Canterbury Land and Water Plan.

I have been farming a mixed cropping and sheep farm in Selwyn District since the early '80s, firstly in partnership with my father and brother and since 1990 on my own account.

In the mid 80s farming was in a very difficult period with poor prices and high interest rates. A number of my friends lost their farms at this time. Since then I have had a strict policy of developing land only to income, with debt only used to buy land. I therefore run what I see as a financially conservative but progressive farming operation.

I have steadily been increasing irrigation on my farm since farming on my account. Increasing the output of the original well and putting in two more wells. I have 2 centre pivots and another going in next month, plus a Briggs rotor-rainer and power rolls.

I do not have the ability to fully irrigate all of my irrigable country and also have 99 hectares of dryland which I intent to irrigate in the future. As noted, I have a farming philosophy of not borrowing money to fund infrastructure and plant which has kept me in business up until now, so it will take time!

While there are many ways in which Variation 1 might affect me and my business, I am primarily concerned about 2 aspects:

- An ability to continue to develop my operation over time.
- Recognition that every season is different, both through the baseline years, and in future.

I would very much like to be able to continue to build and grow my operation over time. I take a long term and multi-generational view to farm business and business growth, and would like to think that my careful approach to development has not left my family and I disadvantaged compared to those who have 'rushed in' and developed quickly with high risk/high debt farm developments.

I also see it as essential that Variation 1 recognises that every season is different, particularly for mixed farms that are not fully irrigated. Variations in rainfall have a significant influence on how I farm, and the amount of water I use for irrigation. In dry years, being in the middle of the Canterbury Plains, I miss out on the foothill showers and coastal showers, and even with irrigation I will still run short of feed and put on more urea and use more water. In wetter years, the dryland areas grow more feed, which means the whole operation runs at lower pressure with stock more spread around and much less need to irrigate or use urea.

I am concerned about the impact of the baseline years on my current operation. These years were generally good growing years with minimal dry periods, which meant we did not use as much urea, or as much irrigation as could be expected in dry years. Therefore I didn't utilise all the water I could have through irrigation.